


Former Students' Perspectives of the Impact of Their Alternative Education Experiences: A Narrative Inquiry

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Purpose

GOAL

- To understand how supports for students in alternative education programs (AEP)s can be understood through a **self-determination theory (SDT)** lens



RESEARCH ?S

- (1) How did participants describe their experiences in the AEPs?
- (2) How did they describe how these experiences impacted them overall, during their time in the AEPs, & after their time in the AEPs?


Why Narrative?

Personal Narratives

- Reveal information in line with the **purpose of our study**
- Are an innovative way to study **self-determination**
- Are appropriate for the study of **marginalized individuals**


Methods

Narrative Inquiry describes human actions through stories...



Participants

- 6 former AEP students
- all female
- Attended AEPs**
- in British Columbia
- that served 20 students (at any one time) between the ages of 15 & 19 who had been underserved in the mainstream school system
- Took part in two narrative interviews**
- 1st interview**- focussed on their life story generally
- 2nd interview**- focussed on the study's research ?s



Analysis


The two former AEP student interviews were treated as one in analyses...

- 1. Holistic-content**
 - 1. read interview until pattern emerged
 - 2. wrote down our 1st & **general impressions**
 - 3. decided on emergent & convergent **themes**
 - 4. highlighted themes
 - 5. documented **our thoughts** about themes
- *wrote narratives**
- 2. Cross-narrative**
 - looked for themes **across narratives**

Findings

PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED (i.e., cross-narrative themes)

1. Experiences in the AEPs



- Kind & caring teachers** who offered instrumental academic guidance
- Close bonds between students** that were fostered through activities that brought to light one another's unique challenges
- The opportunity to understand and use/develop **personal strengths**
- Life skills learning** targeting important aspects of their non-academic lives

2. The overall impact of these experiences

↑ autonomy, belonging & competence, which participants linked to:

During AEP

↑ self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, motivation to attend to school, & school persistence

After AEP

↑ ability to garner resources, communication skills, & academic & career success

Significance

Contributions to SDT ...

Research

- 1. Used in-depth qualitative narrative interview method
- 2. Included youth attending AEPs

Theory

- 1. Identified conditions that helped students meet needs for autonomy, belonging, & competence within AEPs
- 2. Suggests the need for belonging may be at the forefront for female students

Next Steps

FUTURE STUDIES SHOULD CONSIDER ...

- 1. Including a larger & more representative sample (e.g., representation from across the gender spectrum)
- 2. Using experimental design (e.g., in order to draw cause-effect conclusions about the impact of the AEP characteristics participants identified on student outcomes)
- 3. Drawing on other bodies of theory & research (e.g., psychological resilience)